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ABSTRACT

This study explores the problem of maintaining personal-social gains made by children in a long-term family enrichment day care and home visitation program for low income, mainly single-parent families. A prior study of program participants at 3 years of age indicated that they compared favorably to matched contrast children in other preschool programs on several dimensions of Emmerich's Observer Ratings of Personal-Social Behaviors (EORP-SB). Subsequent follow-up studies of 37 kindergarten and 20 first grade children with the EORP-SB showed that at first grade a new set of behaviors emerged among program graduates, and that preschool program gains which remained evident in the kindergarten sample were declining among first grade program graduates. In particular, program children in preschool and kindergarten smiled and laughed more than their matches, while in first grade the contrast group smiled more. Further, the first grade children who were program graduates seemed to seek adult attention in negative as well as positive ways. It is concluded that the transition between preschool program teacher interaction styles and elementary school classroom conditions may be too stressful for many young children, particularly for children from at-risk families. Institutional changes may be necessary if preschool enrichment program gains are to be maintained. (Author/RH)

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PERSONAL SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN AFTER FIVE YEARS IN A FAMILY ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

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Personal Social Adjustment of School Children
after Five Years in a Family Enrichment Program

Two major concerns have emerged in following up long-term early intervention programs. Earlier, the emphasis was on raising cognitive achievement or IQ scores. Recently, there has arisen a growing concern for the effects of intervention programs on the socio-emotional development of children. Particularly, enrichment projects have tried to enhance interpersonal skills, self-actualization, and positive motivation to perceive and use adults as helping teaching resources, to view adults as sources of positive rewards, interesting ideas and activities and affectionate supportive nurturance. Zigler has pointed out, with regard to Head Start programs, that precisely the nourishing, both socio-emotional and physical, of young children ought to be our cardinal objective and that social competence rather than IQ should be employed as the major measure of the success of early intervention programs (Zigler and Trickett, 1978). Zigler's own researches have repeatedly stressed how important emotional motivation is in accounting for positive retest score changes among disadvantaged youngsters who have had little prior positive social interaction with adults.

Other researchers have emphasized the interactive nature of social and intellectual skills in young children. Ogilvie (Note 4) studied 3- to 6-year-old children with well-developed skills in coping with social and intellectual tasks. These children seemed to be able to get and maintain the attention of adults, use adults as sources of information, express affection and hostility to adults and peers under appropriate circumstances, lead and follow peers, compete, show pride in their work, resist distractions, and

involve themselves in adult role-playing behaviors. He found that less competent children look to adults to satisfy emotional needs (emotional rather than instrumental dependency), seek the attention of adults through misbehavior, show hostility to adults, imitate adults and peers, play the role of children or infants, and resist or ignore adult instruction. Beller (Note 1) investigated the interplay between motivational and cognitive variables in preschool children. He found that the more conflicted a child was over dependency, the more impaired he or she was in autonomous achievement striving and self-sufficiency.

More importantly, behaviors reflecting social adaptation of young children to the classroom have been found to predict subsequent school achievement (Kohn & Rosman, 1974). Kellam, Branch & Agrawal (1975) found that ratings of children's social adaptational status in first grade were significantly related to the need for remedial help and school retentions during the subsequent elementary school years.

The Problem

Thus, research evidence suggests the importance of positive social functioning in classrooms for school success. Promotion of just such positive social functioning has been one of the major goals of many developmental preschool programs. Whether such functioning can be maintained and sustained after entry into elementary school may have critical consequences for long-term effects of early intervention efforts.

Research Design, Methods, and Subjects

The present study focused on social personal behaviors of groups of children in kindergarten and in first grade. The experimental groups consisted of children who had graduated from five years of participation in a family

enrichment program that provided developmental day care for the children and a home visitation program with the families. All families were low-income (under $5000 per year), and 85% were single-parent families. None of the mothers had a high school diploma at the time of birth of the experimental child. The home visitation program supported positive family social and learning experiences for the children.

All of the experimental children had experienced loving personal interactions with a variety of teaching, caring adults in a 1 to 4 adult-child ratio during the years of participation in the open-education settings of the Children's Center program. Multi-age, family-style groupings facilitated child-child interactions. Opportunities to enhance learning and positive social experiences were richly provided in daily experiences with teachers, materials and other children.

In the present research, essentially two studies were carried out. In the first study, 37 children in kindergarten and in the second study 20 children in first grade were followed up after graduation from the Children's Center. Contrast children were selected within each of the 15 schools dispersed throughout the city where program graduates were enrolled. A contrast child was chosen, matched for age, sex, race, socio-economic status of the family, classroom, and teacher, for each program graduate for whom data was collected. Permission was received from each child's family to carry out the school observations.

Emmerich's Observer Ratings of Personal-Social Behaviors (Note 2) were used to assess the social interactions of the program and contrast children in classrooms. The 127 Unipolar items of the scale assess specific categories of social and emotional behaviors, such as coping mechanisms and activities

or interests. Each Unipolar item calls for an estimate of a behavior's frequency of occurrence during a 20-minute observation period. For this study, the Emmerich Scale was modified into a five-point scale: (0) totally absent; (1) occurred once; (2a) seldom occurred; (2b) occurred frequently; (3) occurred constantly. In addition, some items were scored to specify the presence or absence of a verbal component.

The Emmerich Ratings include 19 Bipolar Scales. The seven-point Bipolar Scales permit judgment of the relative strengths of the attributes defining each pole. Observers were instructed to make judgments regarding the child's personality for such dimensions as: sensitive to others vs. self-centered; submissive vs. dominant; dependent vs. independent; aggressive toward others; and socially secure vs. socially insecure. These particular five measures were scored separately for adult orientation and response to other child. Thus, the observer's judgments specified whether behaviors were directed toward a teacher or child. Five observers collected data for both studies. Each child was observed for four 20-minute time periods. The data were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney Rank Order procedure to compare experimental and contrast children for the kindergarten groups and the first-grade groups separately.

Results of the Kindergarten Study

Children's Center graduates exhibited the following Unipolar behaviors significantly more frequently ($p < .05$) than their matches in the contrast group.

1. Seeks help or guidance from adult.
2. Seeks physical proximity of adult.
3. Seeks attention from adult through positive bid (overall and verbally).

4. Conforms to routine or routine request of adult.
5. Friendly toward adult (overall and verbally).
6. Friendly toward other child.
7. Exhibits leadership.
8. Behaves competitively.
9. Smiles and/or laughs.
10. Engages in fine manipulative activity.
11. Engages in cognitive activity.
12. Exhibits persistence.
13. Completes activity by him or herself.
14. Praises self.
15. Exhibits active curiosity.
16. Responsive to teaching by adult.
17. Instructs or demonstrates (overall and verbally).
18. Attempts to communicate verbally to adult.
19. Attempts to communicate verbally to other child.
20. Verbally loud.

Contrast group matches exhibited the following Unipolar behaviors more frequently than program graduates:

1. Restlessness.

Analysis of Bipolar items indicated that program graduates were significantly more: involved, relaxed, dominant, energetic, social, independent, purposeful, affectionate to others, and flexible than were their classroom matches. They were also significantly more sensitive to adults and other children, less submissive to adults and other children, less dependent on adults and other children, more affectionate toward adults and other children

and more socially secure around adults and other children than were their matches.

The Bipolar items also indicated that the contrast group kindergarteners were significantly more restrained, self-centered, passive, unstable, timid, destructive, socially insecure and unhappy than were the program graduates.

Results of the First-Grade Study

Program graduates exhibited the following Unipolar behaviors significantly more frequently than their matches:

1. Seeks attention from adult through positive bid.
2. Seeks attention from other child through positive bid (overall and verbally).
3. Seeks attention from adult through deliberate negative bid.
4. Possessive.
5. Bosses adult.
6. Physically aggressive toward adult.
7. Deliberately aggressive toward property.
8. Expresses negative feelings about self, possession or own product.
9. Exhibits active curiosity.
10. Seeks information from adult.
11. Attempts to communicate verbally to adult.
12. Communicates meaningful complex idea to other child.
13. Verbally loud.
14. Talks to self.
15. Difficult to understand.
16. Incomplete communicative act.
17. Becomes defiant, rebellious in response to frustration or threat.
18. Increased quietness in response to frustration or threat.

The contrast group matches exhibited the following Unipolar behaviors more frequently than the program graduates:

1. Seeks or makes a comparative evaluation.
2. Expresses criticism of adult.
3. Expresses criticism of other child.
4. Smiles and/or laughs.
5. Threatens to act aggressively toward other child.

None of the Bipolar items show significant differences between the experimental and contrast children in the First-Grade Study.

Discussion

Program children, who were graduates of the Children's Center, had entered kindergarten with positive social skills both with peers and with adults. Previous research (using the Emmerich Observation Ratings) when they were three years of age had found the program children significantly more smiling, friendly, exhibiting concern for others in distress, nurturant and verbally communicative in comparison with matched contrast children who were at that time attending other preschool programs in the community (Lally & Honig, Note 3). At three years, program children were also found to exhibit more curiosity and cognitive activity. Thus, while in program, these children seemed to be equipped to take charge of their own lives. They seemed well prepared motivationally to be active learners in classroom settings.

The kindergarten findings, reported in this paper, continue to record very positive social behaviors of program graduates with teachers and with peers. Program graduates seek adult help, act responsive to adults, communicate verbally and act friendly toward adults significantly more than their classroom matches. They are also significantly more task persistent, self-actualized in activities, and verbally communicative.

Given these positive findings during the preschool years and in kindergarten, one might conclude that the program graduates would sustain a positive social style that would serve them well in first grade. However, such continuity was not observed when data were analyzed for program graduates and their matches who were in first grade. Indeed, it is interesting to note that only four of the eighteen items reported as occurring significantly more frequently (1, 9, 12, and 13) in first grade were also significant in kindergarten.

School setting and conditions appear to affect children's personal-social style. For the first graders a notable increase in negative behavior toward adults was observed among program graduates. Among the matched contrast group children an increase in negative behaviors toward other children was observed. The classroom observers reported that all the children were less active in first grade, that there were fewer aides than in kindergarten, and that the first grade classrooms were dominated by teacher-initiated activities. This pattern was, of course, incongruent with the experimental children's earlier experiences. In the open-educational settings of the Children's Center, child-initiated activity choice had been strongly encouraged.

Program children used to smile and laugh more than their matches, while in first grade the contrast group children smiled more. How can we understand these differences?

The first-grade children who were program graduates seem to seek adult attention through negative as well as positive bids. These children are still curious and communicate verbally. But as their needs are not met, frustration sets in and the children move into more negative ways of behaving. The adult-child ratio is now far poorer than it was in the Children's Center or even in the kindergarten class. Yet, one could challenge the assumption of a positive

effect of the earlier high adult-child ratio. Is the high level of personal attention offered by adults earlier perhaps in some way inimical to child functioning? Not at all. Examination of preschool psychometric test scores reveals that the experimental children scored higher than their controls on the Caldwell Preschool Inventory. On the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities, program children scored significantly higher than their controls on 4 of 7 subtests administered at 5 years of age. Also at age 5, significantly more of the experimental children ($x^2 = 4.3$, $p < .05$) attained Stanford Binet IQ scores above 89, compared to their controls. Thus, program children were functioning well when they graduated.

A more reasonable explanation for the changes reported here would seem to be that the first grade program graduates were frustrated and disillusioned. Their expectations for learning and for appropriate doses and kinds of personalized adult attention, nurtured earlier by warmly responsive preschool teachers, are being violated. Parents reported that their children complained, "I'm not learning anything." Note that toward other children, the experimental children continued to behave in positive ways. They expressed "meaningful complex ideas" and sought "attention through positive bids." Most of the negative behavior observed in first grade, then, was directed by the experimental children toward the adults, the teachers.

The lessons are fairly clear here. The transition between preschool program teacher interaction styles and elementary school classroom conditions may be too stressful for many young children, particularly for children from at-risk families. "Small groups work best" the ABT Associated National Day Care Study recently reported (1978, p. 12). In this massive study, positive outcomes were associated with small classroom groupings and a high caregiver to child ratio.

Children in these small groups showed more contributing of ideas, considering/ contemplating, persisting at tasks, and cooperating than did children in large groups.

Shipman's recent follow-up study of Head Start graduates may provide further clues to help us understand the present findings. Shipman (Note 5) found a cumulative effect over several years such that sustained experiences of teacher warmth during the elementary school years were associated with more positive outcomes for Head Start graduates.

We believe that a fundamental issue involving institutional systems and adult-child ratios in classrooms needs to be addressed. Shall we enrich the lives of preschool youngsters from low-income, low-education families so that later they can "fit" into regular school experiences which in the past have often meant experiences in failure? Or shall we continue to search for ways to alter early primary education to be more sensitive to the needs of poverty children entering the elementary school?

The New Federal Head Start demonstration program, the Child and Family Resource Project (CFRP) is presently sensitive to just such needs for continuity. CFRP staff assesses specific needs with each family and an overall Family Action plan is drawn up (O'Keefe, 1978). An admirable feature of this program model is the provision of continuity of services from the prenatal period through early elementary school years. Some families require continuity of service which the CFRP is geared to provide.

Banta's study of the effects of Montessori preschools, when compared with other preschool experiences, on later functioning in primary school is illuminating. The following pattern of results emerged. Children who experienced continuity of Montessori program from preschool through kindergarten scored highest on "impulse control, analytic thinking, innovative behavior and

curiosity." Children who graduated from preschool to a non-graded program which allowed self-selection of appropriate materials and activities did almost as well. Lowest test performances were noted when children had no preschool and went on to a conventional primary program (Evans, 1971, p. 55).

Kohn (1977), in his longitudinal study of low-income, urban children, found that the percent of children rated as needing referral for mental health problems rose from 15% to 35% for girls and from 20% to 60% for boys from kindergarten to fourth grade. Kohn, too, found that cooperation, compliance, and interested participation in preschool correlated with subsequent apathy-withdrawal and anger-defiance in later school grades. He observed, "One cannot escape the conclusion that the...public school system is detrimental to the mental health of its pupils" (p. 247).

Finally, it is instructive to remember what Dr. Zigler wrote (1976) with regard to data then available concerning the later performance of Head Start children: "The advantage of Head Start children is not maintained once the children have spent two or three years in elementary school. But how is this finding to be interpreted? The raw data would appear to represent more an indictment of schools rather than of Head Start."

Conclusion

Findings from the present research certainly need to be replicated. But they do raise issues of institutional and systems changes that may become necessary if preschool enrichment program gains are to be sustained against regression. We need to raise questions about the settings in which teachers and children operate, questions about the process of education which is possible where adult-child ratios are very low. How can we alter these settings to maintain positive personal-social behaviors engendered in preschool and family-centered programs? Why do we theorize that there was something wrong

with the enrichment program effects? Why cannot we theorize that there is something wrong with the early public school experiences offered to the children?

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